

H A P P I N E S S :

A N

EPISTLE to a FRIEND.

By Charles Colclough M.D.

C A M B R I D G E,

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A N

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THROUGH Life's wide Scenes who thoughtfully
has stray'd,

Its Sorrows counted and its pleasures weigh'd;
Measur'd the moments dropping smiles and tears,
Pregnant with blithsome hope, or chilling fears,
Joins the loud cry, and echoes to the strain
Of "Man is wretched, and Existence, pain."

Yes,

Yes — Man is wretched when the fever burns,
Or Gout and Stone succeed in painful turns.
No — even when our Bodies feel no smart —
I understand you — Man is sick at heart
When Disappointment on his prospect lowers,
And beats to dust Ambition's lofty towers;
Sick, when unnotic'd Merit droops away,
Unfoster'd by the warmth of Reputation's day;
When injur'd Honor or neglected Pride
Swells into fury Life's empurpled tide;
When Reason, overcome by Passion fails,
Or melts before relaxing Pleasure's gales;
When pierc'd by Envy's rankling darts, he pines,
Or pants for painted toys and dirty mines;
Aspires to giddy power or fickle fame,
And courts that grasp-eluding cloud, a Name.
Most as I judge the reasons thus explain
Why " Man is wretched, and Existence, pain.
But what seductive arts, LORENZO, say
Thus taught our race through devious ills to stray?
Upright and free the great Creator gave
His work to shine, nor meant it Vice's slave.

We

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We fix those faults on Nature, and on Man,
Which God abhors, and fools alone could plan.
For where's the cause compulsive, tell me where,
That lifts our tow'ring aims to soar in Air?
On fancy's waxen wings to roam abroad,
And place our peace in all things, but in God?
If thus to empty Honor we aspire,
Or shrink before Ambition's scorching fire,
No inborn-force compell'd us to despise
The safer lot of Virtue's calmer skies.
Pride was not made for Mortals sprung from Earth,
Who date their dissolution from their Birth.
None have that wisdom God at first design'd,
All weep the forfeit honors of the mind.
Yet pigmy Wisdom struts with Giant pride,
And deals contempt and scorn on every side.
But grant your Wisdom great — then greatly shine
In doing good, that first of acts divine.
Be to the shallow, Sense ; be Virtue's Friend ;
Reprove with meekness ; by Example, mend.
Let your superior conduct plainly prove
Yourself deserving of superior love.

B

Yet

Yet sandy foils do Reputation bear,
Fair to the Sense, yet fickle as 'tis fair;
The shifting voice of party, and of power
Breathes on its root, and nips the short-liv'd flower.
No — Conscience still shall Reputation give,
And worth, by Conscience foster'd, greatly live.

But other ills o'erspread these scenes of woe,
And aim their heavy stroke, and deadly Blow:
Insults — They surely must the bosom warm;
Insults, that kindle meekness into storm.
But can resentment fill a Christian's breast?
As well the Dove might on the billows rest
When bursting floods the highest hills o'erran,
And spread destruction o'er the race of Man:
Those ebbing floods were Harbingers of Peace,
And thus with Christians should Contention cease.
Perhaps those words which forc'd the blood to rise,
Were fiction's cruel spawn, adjusted lies;
Those acts perhaps, which kindled into rage,
Trac'd to their source, that Passion might assuage.
We judge not, or we judge amiss of those,
Whom Rumor whispers, Passion paints as Foes.

But

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But if foul Calumny my conduct stains,
And through my guiltless bosom darts her pains,
Too sensibly I feel — yet Truth shall bring
Her healing aid to blunt the venom'd sting;
Truth shall the malice of my foe controul,
And smoothe the short-liv'd tempest of my soul.

But see where Anguish seeks that poor abode —
And now she spreads Affliction's heavy load.
Stretch'd on a scanty bed, a Father lies
Unheeding Mother's shrieks and Infants' cries;
Distracted view him with a senseless joy
In Fancy's works each busy limb employ;
See him, by gentle tender words unmov'd,
Assault the bosom which he fondly lov'd;
Till spent with empty rage he pants for breath,
And gasping, turns, and sobbs, and sinks in Death.
Dreadful the scene! — yet Hope shall still attend;
The poor man's comfort, and the good man's friend.
'Twas thine, LORENZO, thine perhaps to bear
The noblest part that falls to Mortal's share;
To seek those helpless souls, and give to flow
The tear respondent to another's woe;

To

To ease the torture which misfortune brings,
And hasten comfort on Compassion's wings.
So when a poison by no arts asswag'd,
Through Watt'sham's melancholy cottage rag'd;
When tabid limbs defil'd the homely floor,
And each new sun beheld one cripple more;
Then meek ey'd Pity strove who best should lend
The wanted aid, and be Misfortune's friend.
Then hasted WOOLLASTON, whose gentle breast
Beats high to sooth and succour the distressed;
Then hastned all whom fell disasters move,
The sons of Christian Grace, and Christian Love:
— Compassion thus o'er darkest scenes displays
The chearing lustre of her heaven-born rays.

But lesser sources of distress arise,
That baffle oft the studious and the wise.
A distant prospect of preferment fires,
And cherishes the flame of fond desires:
The something unpossess'd still galls the mind,
Ungratefully to present comfort blind.
Yet have I known, whom riches never mov'd
To quit the station which he most approv'd.

Who

Who greatly knew when Nature's little call,
Had given to Man his necessary ALL;
Who rather than betray a sacred trust,
Could live on less, inexorably just;
Whose honest soul employs each social power,
And where Contentment gilds each well spent hour.

But Age perchance has griefs to us unknown,
That force the tart reply, and peevish groan.
Yet still ARISTUS with a weight of years,
Chearful and pleasant as in youth appears;
Active to think and diligent to plan,
How best to bless his fellow-creature Man;
With his own hands distributing his store,
Giving much happiness, yet wishing more.

Such too, the Guardian of my tender years,
Who watch'd my welfare with a Parent's fears;
His sweet complacence every wish outran;
An honest, upright, good — a kind Old Man.
How great those virtues, which that heart supplied,
Which never pain'd another, till it died!
Yet say, when pestilential mischief reigns,
And spreads wide ravage o'er th' affrighted plains;

C

When

When pining fleecy flocks unnumber'd fall,
And madd'ning oxen struggle in the stall;
Say from what source must consolation flow?
What art can hide the bitterness of woe?
Look up — on Providence securely rest
To light up comfort in thy gloomy breast;
Thy flocks again shall o'er the meadows spread,
And laughing corn shall wave her golden head;
Plenty again within thy walls shall reign,
And Peace succeed to Poverty, and Pain:
Th' Arabian Sage this heavenly maxim knew,
He trusted — and he found the maxim true.

If then, nor Age, nor Penury, nor Pain
Do of necessity life's lustre stain;
If fancied wants, and unimportant cares
Betray us heedless into hidden snares;
Our Folly, not our Fate has mark'd the plan,
And Mischief is the handy work of Man.
— In fine, WHATEVER IS (view'd in the light
Of Providence's Act and Deed) IS RIGHT:
The seeds of Happiness are freely sown,
And each may reap a harvest of his own.

Then

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Then let the jarring sound of murmur cease;
Content is HAPPINESS, and Virtue, PEACE !

Thus to LORENZO would the Muse have said,
But mournful cypress, veils LORENZO's head.
Much valued Friend ! whose truly noble soul
Disdain'd Resentment's narrow base controul ;
Benevolence adorn'd thy short liv'd days,
And stamp'd on fleeting hours, a never-ceasing praise.
Sacred to FRIENDSHIP be this tender Page ;
Be mine, each care and sorrow to assuage,
Where painful Sighs distend a gentle breast,
And almost call thee from thy blissful rest.

F I N I S.

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